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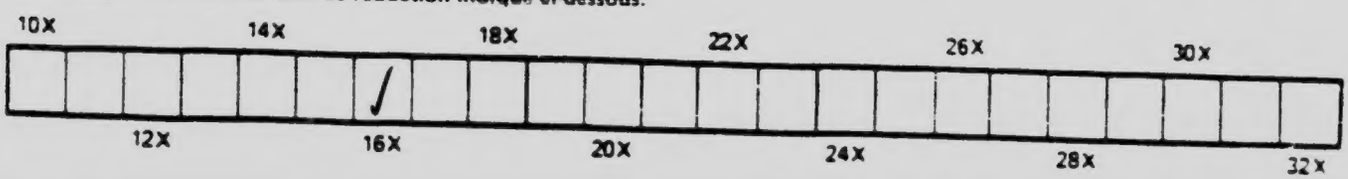

NOVA SCOTIA CHAP-BOOKS. No. 1

Three Sea Songs

By Archibald MacMechan

Published for the Author by H. H. MARSHALL at his Shop over against the PROVINCE HOUSE in Halifax.

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John Macdougall

with kind regards

A. Macmeekan

THREE SEA SONGS

Three Sea Songs.

THE BALLAD OF THE "ROVER."

Come all you jolly sailor lads, that love the
cannon's roar,
Your good ship on the briny wave, your lass
and glass ashore,
How Nova Scotia's sons can fight you presently
shall hear,
And of gallant captain Godfrey in the *Rover*
privateer.

She was a brig of Liverpool, of just a hundred
tons;
She had a crew of fifty-five, and mounted
fourteen guns:
When south against King George's foes she
first began to steer,
A smarter craft ne'er floated than the *Rover*
privateer.

Five months our luck held good all up and down
the Spanish Main;
And many a prize we overhauled and sent to
port again;

Until the Spaniards laid their plans with us
to interfere,
And stop the merry cruizing of the *Rover* priva-
teer.

The year was eighteen hundred, September tenth
the day,
As off Cape Blanco in a calm all motionless we
lay,
When the schooner *Santa Ritta* and three gun-
boats did appear,
Asweeping down to finish off the *Rover* priva-
teer.

With muskets and with pistols we engaged them
as they came,
Till they closed in port and starboard, to play
the boarding game;
Then we manned the sweeps, and spun her
round without a thought of fear,
And raked the *Santa Ritta* from the *Rover*
privateer.

At once we spun her back again; the gunboats
were too close;
But our gunners they were ready, and they
gave the Dons their dose.

They kept their distance after that and soon
away did sheer,
And left the *Santa Ritta* to the *Rover* priva-
teer.

We fought her for three glasses, and then we
went aboard,
Our gallant captain heading us with pistol and
with sword;
It did not take us very long her bloody deck to
clear,
And down came the Spanish colours to the
Rover privateer.

We brought our prizes safe to port—we never
lost a man;
There never was a luckier cruise since cruising
first began;
We fought and beat four Spaniards—now
did you ever hear
The like of Captain Godfrey and the *Rover*
privateer?

THE BALLAD OF "LA TRIBUNE."

As long as men for fellow men face death and falter not,
As long as daring deeds are kept in memory unforgot,
As long as corpses on the shore by any sea are strewn,
Shall be told the wreck and rescue of the frigate *La Tribune*.

'Twas seventeen ninety-seven, and November twenty-third,
When *La Tribune* with all sail set, as straight as flies the bird,
Sped swift to port in Halifax. The wind blew fair from south,
And no one thought of danger, as she near'd the harbour-mouth.

It was the master's greed and pride that cast the ship away;
He would not take a pilot on: he wanted pilot's pay;
He boasted he could bring her into harbour safe and sound,
And on the outer Thrum Cap shoals he ran her hard aground.

Save one for signals, all her guns were lighten'd
in the sea,
And made a reef of iron, on the granite, on
her lee.
'Twas useless; they must wait the tide. And
all that afternoon,
The minute-gun spoke grimly the distress of
La Tribune.

They wait as, with the rising gale, the flood-
tide faster runs,
And the good ship rolls and breaks her bones
on her own tumbled guns.
Still no one dreams, as swiftly fades the winter's
day in night,
Not ten of all her hardy crew shall see tomor-
row's light.

At last she floated with the tide, and in the dark
she drove,
A swaling hulk, before the storm, away to
Herring Cove;
And when the dragging anchor held, and hope
revived again,
She sank, and carried down with her well-nigh
three hundred men.

Some fifty reach'd the rigging, and by the watch-fire's blaze,
All night the men of Herring Cove stood helplessly to gaze
At clinging wretches torn away from their frail hold to die,
Till only eight were left to see the bitter morning sky.

They did not venture out at night, nor yet at dawning day;
They said thro' such a welter never boat could make her way.
And none were found so hardy to affront those breakers wild,
Till the men were sham'd to action by the daring of a child.

An alien fisher 'prentice, he would not stand idly by
While life and strength were in him, and watch those sailors die.
He told to none his purpose, no one guessed what it might be,
Till they saw him rowing down the Cove towards the open sea.

With every sinew starting he slowly fights his way
To where the masts stand quivering against the yeasty spray.
In the drenched rigging where they cling, there were but two alone
Able to stir; the rest hung numb and sodden to the bone.

And in their hour of rescue, the twain their lives forego,
And lower two senseless comrades to the rocking ark below;
They stay behind and watch the overladen boat to shore,
Where the boy lands his precious freight, and seaward turns once more.

A second time he starts alone in rescue to the wrack,
But his boyish strength is broken and the billows sweep him back.
But he has not spent himself in vain; at length a boat is mann'd;
And soon the last faint sailor is safe upon the land.

* * * * * * *

Twelve fathom deep by Herring Cove that
frigate's timbers lie,
To foul the careless inshore nets, as they go
drifting by;
And to this day men tell the tale, and name
the *Tribune* Shoal,
But no one knows the name or fate of that
young hero soul.

OFF CORONEL

Nov. 1, 1914.

In the stormy Southern sunset, great guns
spoke from ship to ship;
Swift destruction, death, and fire leapt from
every iron lip;
Till two crushed and flaming cruisers vanished
dumbly in the night,
Sank, nor left a soul behind to tell of that
disastrous fight.

In the dark, they died, our comrades, and
without a sign they pass'd;
But they fought their guns and kept the Old
Flag flying to the last.
Death is bitter in lost battle, but they died
to shield the Right,
So they swept from that brief darkness into
God's eternal Light.

AUG - 5 1968

Captain Alexander Godfrey's despatch of Oct. 17, 1800, giving the details of this action, is printed in *The Naval Chronicle*, Feb. 1801. See also *The Provincial, or Halifax Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 2, pp. 338 f., 1853; and Murdoch, *History of Nova Scotia*, III, p. 198; and also E. P. Statham, *Privateers and Privateering*, L. 1910, pp. 336-340.

The original account of the wreck of the *Tribune* appeared in *The Royal Gazette and The Nova Scotia Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 1797, twelve days after the event. Some additional details are to be found in Hill's memoir of Sir Brenton Haliburton. Prose versions of this ballad and the following will appear in my forthcoming volume, "Old Province Tales" (Chronicles of Canada).

In H. M. S. *Good Hope*, sunk in the action with Von Spee's squadron on Nov. 1, 1914, were four Canadian midshipmen, Cann, Palmer, Silver and Hathaway. They had just completed their course in the Royal Naval College at Halifax when war broke out.

NOVA SCOTIA CHAP-BOOKS

* 1 *Three Sea Songs*

2 *The Nova-Scotianess of Nova Scotia*

3 *Changing Halifax*

4 *The Memorial Tower*

* 5 *The Orchards of Ultima Thule*

6 *The Log of a Halifax Privateer*

7 *Glamming*
The Neredi's Embrace
The Two Games

8 *The Loss of the Atalante*

9 *"Nova Scarcity"*

10 *The Pleasance*
From Minas to The Wotea Line

11 *The Sky-Line*
Old King's

12 *Spring in Ultima Thule*
The Potato Patch

13 *The Luck of the Grilse*

14 *Twelve Profitable Sonnets*

15 *Twelve Unprofitable Sonnets*

16 *Afoot in Ultima Thule*

(*) **Already published**

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